Amendments to the Claims: This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A boule for use in fabricating microchannel plates, the boule including:

a hollow glass tube formed of non-etchable glass, said tube having a plurality of flat inner surfaces, each surface is generally planar and extends generally parallel to the longitudinal axis of the tube.

2. (Currently Amended) The boule of claim 1 further including:

a plurality of optical fibers, located in said tube, each of said optical fibers having a cladding layer formed of a non-etchable material and a core formed of etchable material, and a plurality of support rods formed of non-etchable material located between the flat inner surfaces and the optical fibers.

3. (Currently Amended) The boule of claim 1 wherein ~~the packing~~said tube has at least 8 flat inner surfaces.

4. (Currently Amended) The boule of claim 1 wherein ~~the packing~~said tube has 12 flat surfaces.

5. (Original) The boule of claim 1 wherein the width of the flat surfaces vary.

6. (Original) The boule of claim 1 wherein the width of each of a first plurality of flat surfaces has a first dimension and the width of each of a second plurality of flat surfaces has a second dimension different than the first dimension.

7. (Original) A boule in accordance with claim 6 wherein the first dimension is smaller than the second dimension.

8. (Currently Amended) The boule of claim 2 wherein the fibers, rods and ~~packing~~ the tube are fused together to form a fused boule.

9. (Original) The boule of claim 2 wherein the support rods have a cross-sectional shape including a flat surface for engaging the flat inner surfaces of the tube.

10. (Original) A microchannel plate formed from the boule of claim 8.

11. (Currently Amended) A method of forming a microchannel plate, said method comprising the steps of:

providing a bundle of fibers wherein, each fiber has an etchable core surrounded by a non-etchable cladding;

packing a plurality of said bundles into a hollow packing tube formed of non-etchable material and which has a plurality of flat inner surfaces;

positioning a plurality of support rods between said fibers and said flat inner sufaces to form a packed boule; and

fusing the fibers, packing tube and support rods to form a fused boule.

12. (Currently Amended) The method claim 11 wherein the ~~glass~~ packing tube has at least 8 flat surfaces.

13. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 11 wherein the ~~glass~~ packing tube has 12 flat surfaces.

14. (Original) The method of claim 11 wherein the width of the flat surfaces vary.

15. (Original) The method of claim 11 wherein the width of each a first plurality of flat surfaces has a first dimension and the width of each of a second plurality of flat surfaces has a second dimension different than the first dimension.

16. (Original) The method of claim 15 wherein the first dimension is small than the second dimension.

17. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 11 wherein the support rods have a cross-sectional shape including a flat surface and wherein at least some of the flat surfaces of the support rods engage the flat inner surfaces of the packing tube.

18. (Original) The microchannel plate formed by the method of claim 11.